

WALTER BLOOMFIELD

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CHAPTER XVI. Continued.

We have seen a great deal of your Holdenhurst clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Evan Price, since you were here. I hardly know which is the greater flatterer, you or he. Your uncle admires him very much, and has invited him to New York; he says he is a "smart" man and ought to leave the Church and become a stockbroker.

With kindest regards, hoping to see you to-morrow or the next day at latest, as well in health as when we parted, believe me to remain, dear Mr. Trueman, very sincerely yours,

CONSTANCE MARSH.

"Let me see that letter, please, Ernest," said my father, when I had finished reading.

I handed the letter to my father. "Poor boy!" he said, after he had glanced through it; "don't be cast down; you have seen nothing of the world yet. There are thousands and thousands of English girls as good as or better than this fair American. Cheer up. Everything is for the best."

CHAPTER XVII. TO THE WEST.

O the weary days and sleepless nights that succeeded the departure of uncle Sam from Holdenhurst! Never in my life before had I been so utterly depressed and wretched. Every day some incident helped to confirm the overthrow of my aspirations and increase my restlessness. In compliance with the earnest pleading of my father, I had written a brief note to Constance Marsh assuring her of my unalterable regard—that was the word he suggested as exactly suited to the occasion—but regretting the impossibility, owing to an unfortunate incident, either of calling upon her in London, or inviting her to Holdenhurst. To that note came no reply; nor could I in reason expect any, though each morning I scanned the mail with hopeless curiosity. About a week afterwards my father received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Price announcing his preference to the living of All Saints, North Brixton, and consequent resignation of the vicarage of Holdenhurst Minor. Mr. Price also stated that as he was not to take up his new duties for three months, he had accepted an invitation to visit America, as he had long desired to study the methods and manners of American divines, and that, being much pressed for time, he regretted his inability to return to Holdenhurst to preach a farewell sermon to his parishioners, so had requested a friend to forward his effects to London—which I afterwards learned was accordingly done, the said effects consisting of two cricket bats, a fowling piece, a fishing rod and tackle, a tobacco jar and several pipes, a shelf-load of French novels with the margins annotated in the reverend gentleman's own hand, and some dozens of slippers. Yet a few days later, and while I was still smarting under this intelligence, I noticed, quite accidentally, an announcement at the bottom of a column in the Times that Mr. Samuel Trueman, the American financier, accompanied by Mrs. Trueman and Miss Marsh, had sailed for New York from Liverpool the day before on board the Cunard steamship *Etruria*.

Though his departure was by no means equal to mine, my father was not without grave anxiety. The renovation of Holdenhurst Hall, and the numerous and extensive improvements in progress on the estate were now fast approaching completion. The work was admirably done, and both house and grounds assumed an aspect incomparably superior to what they had presented at any former period of their history. My father acquainted me with the fact that he had very little money at his banker's beyond the five thousand pounds which his brother had given him, a sum quite inadequate to pay for the work done, and he feared that he would be obliged to renew the mortgage which had so recently been extinguished. With some trepidation he formally inquired of Messrs. Knight and Faulkner what would be the amount of their demand on the completion of their contract, and was informed by that firm that Mr. Samuel Trueman had satisfied their claim in full on a certain date—which we found was the very day my uncle was last at Holdenhurst. This circumstance was a victory for me, who had held, contrary to the opinion of my father, that uncle Sam would keep his word, and honorably pay for the work he had ordered to be done, notwithstanding his denunciation of his brother.

The only thing which could have delivered me out of the piteous condition into which I had fallen at this period (except, of course, the removal of its cause) was rigorous employment of my faculties. Though I did not lack discrimination to perceive this truth, I could not benefit myself thereby, having no power to exert my will. My time was spent in aimlessly wandering about the house and grounds, or sauntering in the library and taking a book at random from a shelf there, opening it, reading a few lines, closing it again, and returning it to its place. I became pale and haggard, and my evident want of the usual attributes of youth was noticed and remarked upon by my father's friends, who were at a loss how to account for the change which had come over me.

Though the days seemed long and wearisome, and the nights almost interminable, yet time passed away with more apparent swiftness for being marked by no particular event. It was the early springtime when I first beheld the girl whom I had fondly hoped to win for my own, from whose sweet companionship I had been ruthlessly

severed by the strangest of events; and that never-to-be-forgotten season had merged into summer, which in its turn had declined and died, and now the autumn was at hand.

One glorious September morning I was listlessly gazing through the window which led out on to the veranda, my hands clasped behind me. From that spot it was I last beheld my uncle Sam as he stood in the roadway contemplating his birthplace, and my position induced a train of thought which could hardly be said ever to be absent from my mind. "Pshaw!" I muttered, turning suddenly round and walking quickly away; "I am a very fool. Here am I pining miserably, wasting my life in unproductive thought. If action based on impulse be bad, surely prolonged contemplation out of which no action grows must be worse. Though Constance Marsh can never be mine; though my father and uncle can never be reconciled; I will not consume my days in useless self-affliction. I will travel; I will go to America; perhaps I will call on my uncle; perhaps—"

"Father," I asked, a minute later, as I stood by his side in the study, where he sat examining an account book; "do you know what next Sunday will be?"

My father looked up at me, and his face wore a puzzled, querulous expression. "Yes, my boy," he replied, and as he spoke I observed that his hair had grown very grey of late; "I have not forgotten it. On Sunday you will complete your twentieth year." "It is of that I was thinking," I said. "And I have also thought that a change of scene would be good for me. As you know, I have been very wretched since that affair with uncle—quite unable to fix my attention on any matter save that from which I would gladly divert it. If you can bear the expense, and do not object to my leaving home for awhile, I think I should like to travel for a few months."

My father looked up sharply. "Why don't you speak plainly, and say out-right that you are tired of your father and long to be with your uncle?" he asked.

"Because if I said so I should lie," I retorted warmly; "and that is what I never did yet. I have told you my opinion of my uncle, and I think as well of him now as ever. But that circumstance does not diminish the affection and respect I bear for you. And I may tell you, that I have abandoned all hope of ever being anything more to Miss Marsh than I am at this minute. Indeed, it is to confirm me in my present mood that I seek the permission and means to travel."

"I take it as most unflinching, most unkind in you, Ernest," continued my father in an injured tone, regardless of the declaration I had just made, "that in all these months that have elapsed since your uncle was here you have never thought proper to ask me to show you the proofs of his perfidy, though I volunteered to do so at the time. You stated then (and now you reiterate) your belief in your uncle's innocence. What is the inference? That your father's careless in a matter of the utmost gravity, on which the honor of his only brother wholly depends?"

"Surely you don't wish to open that question again!" I exclaimed in dismay. "Certainly I do," continued my father. "You tell me you wish to travel—at your age a natural desire, which I heartily approve and will provide money for. But you cannot leave here with my good will until you have heard and seen the things by which I justify my attitude towards your uncle. Having heard and seen them, you will be at liberty to retain or abandon your present ideas respecting the robbery."

"There is nothing I am less willing to be convinced of than my uncle's guilt, but let it be as you say," I assented; and, taking a chair, I seated myself close to the desk.

My father at once thrust his hand into his pocket, drew forth three coins, and laid them in front of me. "See," said he; "there you have three Venetian sequins. Do me the favor to examine them."

I picked up one of the coins; it was of gold, and as large as a halfpenny, but much thinner. On one side was a representation of a shield, with the words, "Sanctus Marcus Venetus," and on the other side a cross, with the words, "Petrus Lando; Dux Venetiarum." The coins, which were in excellent condition, were exactly alike. Having scrutinized each very carefully with the aid of a reading glass, I handed them back to my father, who paused, as if expecting me to make some comment, but I remained silent.

"Pietro Lando," said my father, "was Doge of Venice from 1538 to 1545; so you will agree with me that abundance of sequins such as these must have been in circulation in Venice when your ancestor, Roger Trueman, was there a century later."

I nodded assent, and my father continued: "I am informed by John Adams (than whom a more faithful servant never lived) that your uncle, on the first day of his return here, seized the opportunity while you and I were preparing for dinner, to descend, unobserved by us, into the crypt. It seems he asked old John for a lighted lamp; and John, at loss to know what your uncle wanted with it (for it was broad daylight, as you know), with pardonable curiosity, observed his movements, and was surprised to find that he was playing the part of a spy that he soon afterwards followed your un-

cle, and found him standing, lamp in hand, in front of the Abbot's Cell, probing between the bricks with a pocket knife. John asked your uncle if he could assist him in any way, who thereupon turned upon him in great anger and alarm, cursing him for a meddling old fool. A little later your uncle gave old John two sovereigns, and told him not to think seriously of what he had said; that he liked to express himself emphatically. The incident impressed our old servant as a strange occurrence, but aroused in him no suspicion of foul play. When, however, on the occasion of his visit here with his wife, your uncle was observed to go down into the crypt a second time, and to remain there a greater part of one night, old John feared that some sinister design against my interests must be afoot; yet he dared not again follow him, and refrained from reporting the circumstance to me lest, my brother having gone there with my permission, I should resent the imputation which the giving of such information would necessarily imply."

Again my father paused, as if expecting me to remark upon his narrative; but I uttered no word, and he went on: "On visiting the crypt next morning John found that sufficient bricks had been removed to allow of entrance into the cell, and entering there himself for the first time he observed that the place contained several very heavy chests. Concluding that it was merely curiosity which had induced your uncle to visit the crypt, John did not go down there again until the day before you went to London, and he picked up two of these sequins just outside the cell. The third sequin was found by a housemaid in the bed room occupied by your uncle and aunt, and was brought by her to me."

A long silence ensued, which both of us seemed unwilling to break. At last I said: "And you are satisfied that uncle Sam stole those sequins?" "Unfortunately, I am," he replied, bowing his head. "I wish to Heaven I could have arrived at some other conclusion. But it was not possible; the evidence was too clear and admitted of no alternative."

"The evidence is not clear to me. Might it not be that some person other than uncle Sam is the thief—old John himself, for instance—and that he is diverting suspicion of the real thief to your brother?"

"Ah, my boy, I have thought deeply of all that," said my father, shaking his head sadly. "John Adams is an old man who believes he is without a relation in the world. He was in your grandfather's service when he was quite a young boy, years before I was born, and has always shown himself truthful and honest. He does not want for money, for not long ago he told me that he had £600 in the bank, the result of his lifelong economy and self-denial. Now that he is old, and visibly nearing the close of his life, it is quite improbable that he would go out of his way to rob me of a large sum of money which could be of very small use to him. Besides, he was always an admirer of your uncle Sam; he frequently asked me for news of him, and expressed much pleasure when informed that he was coming to England. And these are the circumstances of the case, all of them pointing one way. Did not your uncle himself speak to me about the treasure very soon after his return here—a subject not mentioned by anybody for I don't know how many years. And what of the sequin found by Phoebe on the floor of your uncle's bedroom? And haven't we seen what has been the effect upon John of the whole affair? Why, it very nearly killed him; and to this day he goes about the house the shadow of his former self. He has aged terribly. Dr. Thurlow was remarking to me only yesterday how rapidly he is breaking up."

"Still I am not convinced," I said; "but you make me doubt, which before I did not."

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The child shook her head. "But," persisted her father, "think how much money this room full of gold would be. Think how many things you could buy with it. Don't you think I'd better let the man have little brother?"

"No," said the daughter, "let's keep him till he's older. He'll be worth more then."—New York Times.

Beyond Classification.

The dodo will bite, the worm will turn. At one fashionable boarding house a young lady who daily ate hash with the other guests acquired quite a reputation for odd table manners. They were unique. She would haul any dish she fancied up to her place and eat it, regardless of the ugly glances of the others. They might cry out, "Help, help, help, or help wanted," despairingly, but they never got it. One morning at breakfast her mamma saw a stern look of disapproval on the face of a new boarder, a swell young man. "Mr. Hightone," she began, suavely, "I trust you will pardon my daughter's bad manners."

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"Better were I dead!" moaned the poet. "Don't be silly!" the woman, his wife, exclaimed. "But how else am I to get myself anecdotalized in the literary publications?" he demanded, turning on her fiercely.

She shivered. "How, indeed?"—Puck.



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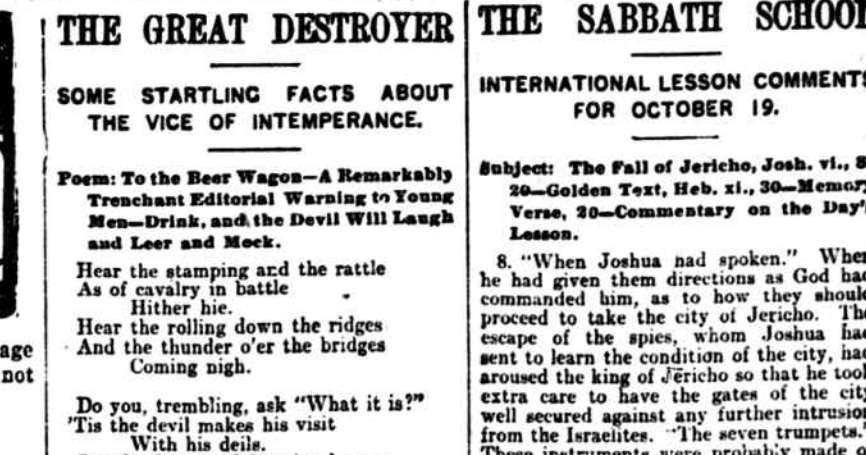
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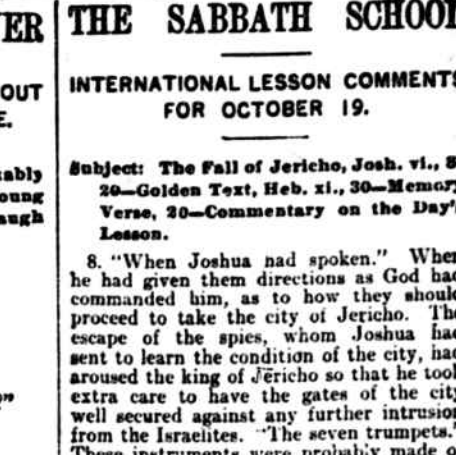
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MONTE CARLO COAT.

New York City.—Monte Carlo coats are in the height of style and are eminently comfortable as well as smart. This excellent model is adapted to taste, and found him standing, lamp in hand, in front of the Abbot's Cell, probing between the bricks with a pocket knife. John asked your uncle if he could assist him in any way, who thereupon turned upon him in great anger and alarm, cursing him for a meddling old fool. A little later your uncle gave old John two sovereigns, and told him not to think seriously of what he had said; that he liked to express himself emphatically. The incident impressed our old servant as a strange occurrence, but aroused in him no suspicion of foul play. When, however, on the occasion of his visit here with his wife, your uncle was observed to go down into the crypt a second time, and to remain there a greater part of one night, old John feared that some sinister design against my interests must be afoot; yet he dared not again follow him, and refrained from reporting the circumstance to me lest, my brother having gone there with my permission, I should resent the imputation which the giving of such information would necessarily imply."

Again my father paused, as if expecting me to remark upon his narrative; but I uttered no word, and he went on: "On visiting the crypt next morning John found that sufficient bricks had been removed to allow of entrance into the cell, and entering there himself for the first time he observed that the place contained several very heavy chests. Concluding that it was merely curiosity which had induced your uncle to visit the crypt, John did not go down there again until the day before you went to London, and he picked up two of these sequins just outside the cell. The third sequin was found by a housemaid in the bed room occupied by your uncle and aunt, and was brought by her to me."

A long silence ensued, which both of us seemed unwilling to break. At last I said: "And you are satisfied that uncle Sam stole those sequins?" "Unfortunately, I am," he replied, bowing his head. "I wish to Heaven I could have arrived at some other conclusion. But it was not possible; the evidence was too clear and admitted of no alternative."

"The evidence is not clear to me. Might it not be that some person other than uncle Sam is the thief—old John himself, for instance—and that he is diverting suspicion of the real thief to your brother?"

"Ah, my boy, I have thought deeply of all that," said my father, shaking his head sadly. "John Adams is an old man who believes he is without a relation in the world. He was in your grandfather's service when he was quite a young boy, years before I was born, and has always shown himself truthful and honest. He does not want for money, for not long ago he told me that he had £600 in the bank, the result of his lifelong economy and self-denial. Now that he is old, and visibly nearing the close of his life, it is quite improbable that he would go out of his way to rob me of a large sum of money which could be of very small use to him. Besides, he was always an admirer of your uncle Sam; he frequently asked me for news of him, and expressed much pleasure when informed that he was coming to England. And these are the circumstances of the case, all of them pointing one way. Did not your uncle himself speak to me about the treasure very soon after his return here—a subject not mentioned by anybody for I don't know how many years. And what of the sequin found by Phoebe on the floor of your uncle's bedroom? And haven't we seen what has been the effect upon John of the whole affair? Why, it very nearly killed him; and to this day he goes about the house the shadow of his former self. He has aged terribly. Dr. Thurlow was remarking to me only yesterday how rapidly he is breaking up."

"Still I am not convinced," I said; "but you make me doubt, which before I did not."

To be continued.

Holdings For a Rise.

Former Congressman Cable of Illinois has a charming young daughter who is receiving her education in France. When she was several years younger than she is now her father took her on his knee one day and said to her:

"To-day a man asked me if I would not sell little brother. He said he would give me a whole room full of gold. Shall I let him have little brother?"

The child shook her head. "But," persisted her father, "think how much money this room full of gold would be. Think how many things you could buy with it. Don't you think I'd better let the man have little brother?"

"No," said the daughter, "let's keep him till he's older. He'll be worth more then."—New York Times.

Beyond Classification.

The dodo will bite, the worm will turn. At one fashionable boarding house a young lady who daily ate hash with the other guests acquired quite